



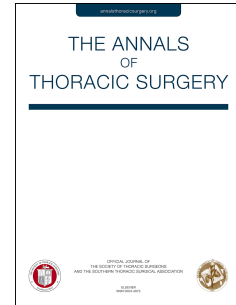
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Resident Response to the 2019 Thoracic Surgery Practice and Access Task Force

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Resident Response to the 2019 Thoracic Surgery Practice and Access Task Force

To the Editor:

As trainees committed to the field of cardiothoracic surgery, it was both comforting and gratifying to read the recent report from the Society of Thoracic Surgeons Practice and Access Task Force.¹ It is certainly reassuring to see evidence of the tremendous level of career satisfaction that we can hope to enjoy in our careers. While the rates of burnout and depression symptoms were high, it was encouraging to have this variable measured given that it was not included in the 2014 iteration of this survey.² A response rate of 27.9% is laudable; however, we could not help but be concerned about the data hidden in the 72.1% of subjects who did not respond, particularly as it relates to burnout and depression. We presume that someone suffering from burnout or depression related to their work would be less likely to respond to such a survey. Furthermore, the survey could not hope to capture those who left the field entirely, or never even entered it, due to these pervasive issues. Anecdotally, we can all likely recall colleagues who fall into this category. Our fear is that the study methodology, because of this inherent selection bias, may lend itself to inflating the degree of career satisfaction while underestimating the prevalence of burnout and depression, which is already admittedly higher for cardiothoracic surgeons.³ Overall, we applaud the work of Ikonomidis et al and are reaffirmed in our own decisions to pursue careers in cardiothoracic surgery. We are simultaneously put on guard for evidence of work-related burnout and depression in our mentors, colleagues, and peers. We once again commend the STS and the Practice and Access Task Force on this work and urge them to continue to promote individual surgeon wellness while importantly pursuing further study of burnout and depression in the field. Especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the holistic wellness of the field will be critical in our mission to provide high quality care for our patients.

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